**Indicators of a school's contribution to well-being
NCSL events in support of the Ofsted/DCSF Consultation**

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Summary Report: Dr Denis Mongon

Context
In November 2008 Ofsted and the DCSF jointly published a paper which proposed:
- a rationale for assessing the contribution which schools make to well being of their pupils,
- a set of indicators relating to quantified outcomes over which schools can have significant influence,
- a set of indicators based on the perceptions of pupils and parents and
- a protocol for the use and limitations of the indicators.

The consequent consultation asked, in terms, the following nine questions:
1. Do you agree with the proposed view of schools' accountability for well-being?
2. Do you agree that a 'well-being profile' for the local area should be made available to schools and inspectors?
3. Do you agree with the proposed use and limitations of indicators?
4. Do you agree with the proposals for the publication of the indicators?
5. Are these proposed indicators relating to quantified outcomes, the right ones?
6. Will the items proposed for the questionnaires on pupil and parent perception yield appropriate indicators of pupils' well-being and the school's contribution to it?
7. Do you agree with the proposed approach to accredit national survey providers?
8. Do you agree that an accreditation system as proposed above would be appropriate?
9. Do you agree that, where appropriate, school-level survey of perceptions should be brought together with other surveys such as Tellus and the FfE to avoid duplication?

NCSL Role
In support of the consultation, NCSL in collaboration with Ofsted and the DCSF commissioned three face to face events and two webex seminars at which the proposals could be shared with school leaders, explored in discussion and commented on by them. The evaluation of the events is included as Appendix 1

Approach
The five events were each constructed around three groupings of the consultation questions:
- Questions 1 and 2 to explore the key principles of the approach,
- Questions 3, 4 and 5 to explore the quantified outcome indicators to be used,
- Questions 6, 7 and 8 to explore the issues around pupil and parent perceptions.
Question 9 was not a focus in the design of these events and was not raised by participants.

Outcome
The face to face, one day events were held in London, Manchester and Nottingham and attended by a total of around one hundred school leaders. The two online Webex events held at 4.30 attracted around twenty participants. The evaluation of the events indicates they were very well received and a summary of the evaluation scores is included as Appendix 2.

Participants in the day events voted on each of the questions before and after discussing them. The voting recorded after each question was discussed is reported in the narrative at the appropriate points and reflects a fairly consistent trend towards increased disagreement with the proposals following the discussions. The majority section (agreement <> disagreement is highlighted for each section at each venue.

Q1 and Q2
- **Do you agree with the proposed view of schools' accountability for well-being?**
- **Do you agree that a 'well-being profile' for the local area should be made available to schools and inspectors?**

In Question 1, the principle of some accountability for schools seemed to be broadly accepted. The recorded comments revealed concerns about the detail and consequences. One concern which permeated this conversation was the extent to which local context could, should and would be taken into account. Other, particular concerns included:
- being held accountable for outcomes beyond the school's control or influence,
- the difference between effort and outcomes,
- the contribution, or not of other services,
- the role of parents in their children's well being,
- apparently different emphases between these proposals and National Strategies,
- the time allowed for inspectors to assess the context,
- the background and experience of inspectors,
- the quality of judgements that could be made,
- public perception and misperception.

Responding to Question 2, most school leaders supported the proposal for a 'well being profile' to be available to inspectors and more widely, and some saw potential to enhance the profile of wider ECM Outcomes as measures of school performance, although concern about this proposal was more deep rooted than in the discussion about Q1. Many of the concerns about Q1 crossed into Q2 with additional concerns about
- definitions of 'locality',
- possible counter-productive effect on community cohesion,
- possible detriment to the qualitative narratives in SEFs,
- reliability of data for small schools, and
- uses to which an area profile might be put by the local press, parents and the LA.

Q1: Do you agree with the proposed view of schools' accountability for well-being?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither/ Nor	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Undecided
London	8%	**58%**	12%	19%	4%	0%
Manchester	3%	**65%**	6%	19%	6%	0%
Nottingham	10%	**50%**	3%	27%	3%	7%

Q2: Do you agree that a 'well-being profile' for the local area should be made available to schools and inspectors?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither/ Nor	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Undecided
London	21%	**39%**	7%	14%	14%	4%
Manchester	13%	**48%**	13%	16%	10%	0%
Nottingham	10%	**45%**	13%	19%	10%	3%

Q3, Q4 and Q5
- **Do you agree with the proposed use and limitations of indicators?**
- **Do you agree with the proposals for the publication of the indicators?**
- **Are these proposed indicators relating to quantified outcomes, the right ones?**

It emerged in the discussions that leaders felt that their answers to Q3 and Q4 were heavily dependent on their answer to Q5. The widespread challenge to the proposed indicators (in response to Q5) meant that there was consequent resistance to the proposals for publication and use which are the subject of Q3 and Q4. For that reason, the analysis in this section will run in reverse order, beginning with Q5 and ending with Q3.

In answer to Question 5, the indicators were repeatedly described as simplistic, secondary biased and unfair to schools in disadvantaged areas. There was a general suspicion about 'raw, numerical data': its reliability, its interpretation and its capacity to reflect a school's work and context. Attendance rates were seen as 'too simplistic' and over dependent on factors beyond a school's control. Percentages for exclusion and school lunches can be contra-intuitive on well being unreliable. For example, take up of lunches is not the same as eating, still less healthy eating; exclusions can rise to protect some students' well-being. PE provision can be inhibited by room access and building facilities especially in small schools and 'high quality' PE is another order of judgement. Despite the criticism, it appeared that the same indicators are widely used by schools to reflect on their own work. The major concern therefore seemed to be the interpretation of the indicators and their use in judgements by third parties, including but not only inspectors, who might not have contextual awareness.

Alternative suggestions for indicators included 'enrichment', emotional well-being, inclusion, punctuality, badges such as UNICEF, Healthy Schools, Sports Mark, Arts Mark and Eco-schools, take up of extended services, community education and extension opportunities, engagement with other services and quality of transition arrangements.

Q5: Are these proposed indicators relating to quantified outcomes, the right ones?

Voting after discussion

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither/ Nor	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Undecided
London	0%	15%	11%	30%	41%	4%
Manchester	0%	7%	14%	34%	45%	0%
Nottingham	0%	13%	0%	33%	53%	0%

In response to Question 4, the view that publication would be fine if there was confidence in both the indicators and the data, was overwhelmed by a deep concern about how the published data would be used and what the unintended consequences would be. Even if the data is reliable, and that was questioned, it would be compiled to create local league tables and might add to local prejudices. The data would, it was expected, quickly become public in more or less controlled ways and then be subject to parental and media interpretation with consequences, for better or worse, on admission applications. There was also a thread asking if parents were really interested in this data. Data is often a snapshot and does not show trends. Any published material needs a contextual summary to place it in time and locality.

4

There were repeated questions about the implications for compilation and publication of School Profiles in the new context.

One school noted that the publication of its students' perceptions of their safety helped promote local action for change.

Q4: Do you agree with the proposals for the publication of the indicators?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither/ Nor	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Undecided
London	0%	3%	0%	17%	76%	0%
Manchester	3%	14%	17%	45%	21%	0%
Nottingham	0%	3%	7%	43%	47%	0%

In the discussion of Question 3, the emphasis seemed to be more about the limitations than the use. Accountability for well-being is accepted and something useful needs to be developed but this approach has too many limitations.

There was a small number of examples of schools individually or in a network using indicators of this kind to inform their work and some aspiration that the use of these indicators will balance the ECM and attainment debates. Those comments were few in comparison with the recurring concerns about the thresholds at which these indicators might trigger a risk assessment and consequent inspection. It was not evident to the school leaders how contextual information would be included and weighted transparently in the risk assessment. There were also widespread doubts about the ability or capacity of inspection teams to make sound judgements based on the indicators. This approach again appears to "hit" socially deprived schools. Clear guidance would be needed to show that other factors are taken into account

There were doubts about whether the available data is really reliable enough for the uses described. The data does not necessarily reflect context or effort and cannot be used without that contextual perspective from the school. It may not reflect cluster or network arrangements, definitions or partnership are too loose to be reliable. The proxy nature of some of the indicators was also a concern, what is their connection to a pupil's well-being?

Q3: Do you agree with the proposed use and limitations of indicators?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither/ Nor	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Undecided
London	0%	15%	11%	30%	41%	4%
Manchester	10%	14%	28%	28%	10%	10%
Nottingham	11%	21%	4%	36%	29%	0%

Q6, Q7 and Q8
- **Will the items proposed for the questionnaires on pupil and parent perception yield appropriate indicators of pupils' well-being and the school's contribution to it?**
- **Do you agree with the proposed approach to accredit national survey providers?**
- **Do you agree that an accreditation system as proposed above would be appropriate?**

The comments on Q6 produced more direct references to current practice than in any of the other sections. Schools reported an enormous range of ways in which they trawl for pupil and parental perceptions. These included questionnaires, school councils, pupil conferences, problem boxes, lunch with pupils, house systems, learning walks, feedback from peer mentors, open forums, weekly drop in centres, focus groups, forums, circle time, and informal parent meetings for parents to raise issues.

In the discussions there was a thread which described these indicators as 'broadly appropriate' and certainly better than the quantified outcomes. There was some welcome for verbs in the indicators which leaders seemed to feel reflected their role more fairly. These included 'promotes', 'discourages', 'helps', 'offers' and 'supports'.

There were several suggestions for additional or alternative indicators including resilience, self esteem, kindness, manners, confidence, optimism, a global dimension, community cohesion, UNICEF rights of the child and spirituality, especially in faith schools

There were questions about whether a different weighting would or should be applied to different indicators.

There was some feeling that a secondary bias 'shone through' in the criteria which needed to be tailor-made for each age group.

There was however a deep anxiety about the nature and validity of perceptions: what is the difference between perception and reality, who can tell which is which, what weight will be given to the perceptions of different groups (especially parents) and whose version of reality would prevail when it came to making judgements?

'Bullying' attracted more comments than any other particular indicator in this discussion with a range of concerns including how it would be defined, identified or understood and where it might be occurring, in or out of school.

Q6: Will the items proposed for the questionnaires on pupil and parent perception yield appropriate indicators of pupils' well-being and the school's contribution to it?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither/ Nor	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Undecided
London	12%	35%	15%	19%	19%	0%
Manchester	8%	16%	16%	32%	24%	4%
Nottingham	0%	74%	15%	11%	0%	0%

Responses to Q7 and Q8 overlapped considerably and are best considered together.

There was some agreement that it would be a good idea to have accredited providers with the expertise to produce well designed and carefully worded questionnaires, (positively worded please) but there were also queries and some major reservations.

There were concerns about whether a national system might be more expensive and who would pay, though a handful thought it might be less expensive nationally overall and for some individual schools. Some existing providers might be accredited and some existing school survey used as models.

There was a strong resistance to a simply national survey and strong arguments for an approach which allowed for local questions to be added to a central core. The need for contextualised analysis was a recurring theme.

Though there was some recognition of the value of anonymous questionnaire returns, many of the leaders were opposed to this. They thought that it was not necessary and prevented them from contacting parents who expressed concerns. They were surprised at the proposal that parents might be worried about 'reprisals' if they were critical. There was a worry that less advantaged parents could be excluded by the methodology.

The data could be 'distorted' by a minority of parents at a small school or by 'unfortunate' timing just after a single incident. Which leads to the repetition of concerns about whether the results will be public and, if so, who will use them to what ends?

Q7: Do you agree with the proposed approach to accredit national survey providers?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither/ Nor	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Undecided
London	0%	15%	7%	44%	30%	4%
Manchester	4%	21%	29%	29%	17%	0%
Nottingham	4%	25%	14%	39%	18%	0%

Q8: Do you agree that an accreditation system as proposed above would be appropriate?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither/ Nor	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Undecided
London	0%	16%	16%	28%	40%	0%
Manchester	8%	16%	16%	32%	24%	4%
Nottingham	4%	29%	4%	32%	32%	0%

Evaluation report

Relevance and content	4 excellent	3 good	2 satisfactory	1 poor
Do you feel that you have been able to clearly express your opinion about the issues raised?	43	32	3	
Has the day been useful in clarifying your understanding of the issues?	33	44	3	
Have you been able to learn from your colleagues' practice as a result of attending these events?	33	38	7	
Event Organisation				
Pre-arrival information (registration, maps, etc)	25	34	18	2
Event location	28	39	11	2
Organisation on the day	35	36	7	
NCSL				
Value of NCSL involvement in supporting consultation exercises	38	34	2	
Relevance of participation in consultation events for your role	41	29	5	1
Ofsted				
Overall level of satisfaction with the event	25	38	2	
How effective is this event in working with Ofsted	28	28	11	
Percentages	**44%**	**47%**	**9%**	**1%**
	excellent	**good**	**satisfactory**	**poor**